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STATE FOR EUR/SCE, ATHENS FOR AMB SPECKHARD

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: NATIONAL NATO COORDINATOR ON THE NAME  
DISPUTE

REF: 2007 SKOPJE 987 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

#### SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Macedonia's NATO Coordinator/Name Negotiator, Nikola Dimitrov, told the Ambassador during a January 11 meeting that it appeared increasingly likely that Greece would veto NATO membership for Macedonia in the absence of a resolution of the name dispute before the NATO summit in April. He said the GOM remains firm in rejecting any name change in exchange for NATO membership, and that the Greek veto threat has strengthened Macedonian rigidity in this regard. Pressed by the Ambassador to consider a way out of the maze, Dimitrov said the 2005 Nimetz (triple-name) proposal might be a starting point for moving the UN talks on the name forward. The Ambassador urged that Macedonia take a comprehensive look at the benefits as well as costs of reaching an accommodation with Greece on international usage of their name. She recommended that the GOM make a constructive proposal at the next round of UN-mediated talks with Greece. End summary.

#### VETO LOOMING

¶2. (C) Macedonia's National NATO Coordinator and Name Negotiator, Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov, reviewed current developments regarding the name issue during a meeting with the Ambassador January 11. Dimitrov said that, during recent bilateral consultations in Berlin, his German counterparts had told him they believed Macedonia deserved to be invited to join NATO, but that the Greeks were almost certain to veto an invitation unless Macedonia agreed to a name solution before the Bucharest Summit. The Germans had bluntly added that it was unlikely other EU/NATO countries would pressure Athens to withhold a veto.

#### GREECE UNYIELDING

¶3. (C) Dimitrov also said he had met with his Greek counterpart in the name negotiations recently in Brussels; it had been apparent from that meeting that Athens was determined to use a veto in the event the two sides did not reach an agreement on the name before the Bucharest Summit. The two negotiators were scheduled to meet again on January 21, Dimitrov said, together with UN Special Envoy Nimetz and an observer from the office of the UN Secretary General.

Nimetz was hoping to achieve progress in that meeting on confidence-building measures (CBMs) and on the name negotiations, but the Greeks were set against any movement on CBMs in the absence of a name solution, Dimitrov said. He expected there would be a follow-up encounter in February.

#### MACEDONIANS FIRM -- NO NAME CHANGE FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

14. (C) Dimitrov said that Macedonia's NATO Interministerial Committee, which includes opposition party representatives, had met on January 10 to review progress on meeting NATO criteria and to discuss the Greek veto threat. Dimitrov said that the opposition party representatives, including from the ethnic Albanian DUI party, were even more vehement than the members of government in rejecting any name change for the sake Macedonia's NATO bid. He added that the GOM would counter any attempt to impose a deadline for resolving the dispute before the NATO summit, but might consider pledging not to use a NATO invitation (in the event Athens relented) to pursue a unilateral name change.

#### VETO THREAT INCREASES MACEDONIAN RIGIDITY

15. (C) The Ambassador urged Dimitrov to consider working with Nimetz and the Greeks on a solution that would be substantially agreed before the Bucharest Summit, but not announced until after membership invitations had been issued. Dimitrov said that was unlikely, and that the Greek veto threat had actually strengthened inter-party cohesion in Macedonia on keeping the constitutional name intact. His own negotiating instructions were now "more rigid," he said, which gave him even less flexibility in pursuing a compromise solution.

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16. (C) Greek proposals to change the name to "New Macedonia," "Upper Macedonia," or "Slav Macedonia" were non-starters, Dimitrov said, as was the Greek insistence that a compound name solution would have to be used in all multilateral fora and in Macedonia's bilateral relations. If Athens ultimately vetoed a NATO invitation for Macedonia, he added, Skopje most likely would consider the 1995 Interim Agreement "nullified" and would take the name issue to the UN Security Council.

#### LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE MAZE

17. (C) The Ambassador asked whether the GOM had run through a realistic cost-benefit analysis of different courses of action, including the use of a differentiated name in international fora, and whether Macedonia might be willing to offer a proposal that went beyond the current dual-name proposal to keep the Nimetz talks moving. Dimitrov replied that Nimetz's October 2005 proposal (practically a triple-name solution) had been acceptable as a starting point for discussions. He would discuss with the Prime Minister and President later during the week of January 14 whether there might be a possibility for moving beyond the dual-name framework, but was not optimistic about prospects for doing so.

18. (C) Visibly emotional, Dimitrov said that if Macedonia were to enter NATO after being forced to compromise on the name, that would contradict the very principles of NATO as an Alliance of democratic countries. Such an outcome would run counter to NATO values and would send a negative signal to future NATO aspirants.

19. (C) The Ambassador asked whether it would be possible for the GOM to prepare the ground for an eventual differentiation in Macedonia's name for use in international fora by arguing to the public that the country would retain its constitutional name intact, and would only be shedding the hated "FYROM" in exchange for a compound formulation built on the constitutional name. Dimitrov said he had raised such arguments in the past, but both the President and Prime

Minister had rejected such thinking out of hand. The Ambassador pressed Dimitrov to think of ways to exit the maze, proposing that the government compile a pros and cons "balance sheet" for courses of action that might end the impasse.

COMMENT: BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARIBDIS

¶10. (C) The polished and normally unflappable Dimitrov clearly was shaken by the thought that it increasingly looks as if both Skopje and Athens will in the end collide as they navigate domestic political waters in the runup to the Bucharest Summit. Greece's increasingly visible veto threat has, predictably, hardened attitudes in Macedonia. In the days and weeks ahead we will engage Macedonia's leadership to help them focus instead on the country's present and future interests.

¶11. (C) We believe the best we can hope for, given the determination of Macedonia's political leadership not to appear to be conceding on the name issue in exchange for NATO membership, is a scenario in which Macedonia receives an invitation on the merits of its performance and under the provisional name "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as agreed in the 1995 Interim Accord, but is then pressed to resolve the name dispute before its membership is ratified by all NATO members. This would involve language to that effect in the invitation letter and/or a pledge by Macedonia not to pursue a name change once in NATO. But the essential element will be a compromise on international (not bilateral) usage as proposed in the Nimetz framework.

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